

Legislative changes, policy shifts, phased rollouts, and compliance updates you need to be aware of

Early 2026

BNG - NSIP Consultation Response

Government response expected early 2026 ahead of mandatory rollout.

Applies to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

BS 5837 (Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition & Construction)

Comment resolution phase begins February 2026.

Updated standard expected to be approved and published later in 2026.

SCOTLAND

Natural Environment Bill

Stage 3 expected early 2026, ahead of Scottish Parliament dissolution in May 2026.

Final amendments and vote before Royal Assent.

WALES

Environment (Principles, Governance and Biodiversity Targets) Bill

Stage 2 expected early 2026.

Royal Assent possible later in 2026.

NPPF Consultation (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment)

Closes March 2026.

Response expected later in 2026.

March 2026

Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) - Protected Sites

Delivery of up to 12 protected site strategies.

Focus on pollution reduction and habitat degradation.

April 2026

Climate Change Levy (CCL)

New rates apply from 1 April 2026.

May 2026

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Biodiversity net gain likely to be required for NSIPs from May 2026.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Parliamentary Elections

Deadline for passing the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill before elections.

Throughout 2026

BNG Changes - Minor & Brownfield Developments

Adjustments expected for:

- Small sites <0.2ha
- Brownfield sites with potential exemption of sites <2.5ha
- Wider changes to simplify the process

Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 - Full Rollout

Enforced throughout 2026:

- Pollution Incident Reduction Plans (PIRPs)
- Consideration of Nature-Based Solutions (NbS)
- Stronger penalties for missed pollution targets

Environmental Delivery Plans (EDPs)

First EDPs for nutrients expected late 2026.

Bathing Water Regulations

Introduction of a new feasibility assessment framework.

Flood Risk Activity Permits

Increased exemptions for low-risk activities to support development and infrastructure.

SCOTLAND

BNG - Scottish Biodiversity Metric:

Consultation mid-2026, adoption 2027.

Trees & Planning Standards

BS 3998:2010 (Tree Work - Recommendations)

- Under review via open consultation.
- No confirmed publication date.

BS 42020 (Planning & Development Code of Practice)

- Update expected during 2026.

WALES

Tree & Woodland Protection

Planning (Wales) Bill replaces 1999 regulations.

Introduces:

- Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs)
- Woodland Preservation Orders (WPOs)
- Broader definition of amenity
- Simplified procedures

Expected to come into force in 2026.

November 2026

Post-Legislative Response to the Environment Act

Government response expected November 2026.

Expected in 2026

Following publication of the Independent Water Commission White Paper:

- UK and Welsh Governments to jointly publish the 2026 Transition Plan (accompanied by interim strategic guidance for the current regulators).
- Water Reform Bill introduced to Parliament.

Further details on the Government response to the Nuclear Regulatory Review 2025 and potential changes to environmental legislation such as the Habitats Regulations.